

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 ACDA-10 EUR-08 SP-02
L-01 NSC-05 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 EB-04 ARA-10
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R 261321Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5480
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN
USMTM RIYADH
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 3679

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, YE, SA, US
SUBJ: ARMS FOR YEMEN

BEGIN SUMMARY: SALIH TALKS FURTHER ABOUT ARMS AND
SOVIETS. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH TWO WEEKS SINCE LAST INTERVIEW WITH YAR
PRESIDENT SALIH I SOUGHT INTERVIEW WITH HIM ON 25 JULY
TO GAUGE HIS THINKING SINCE ELECTION, PARTICULARLY HIS
REACTION TO ASSURANCES FROM PRESIDENT CARTER ABOUT
YEMENI SECURITY AND HIS VIEW OF FUTURE, BOTH DOMESTICALLY
AND VIS-A-VIS SOUTH YEMEN. SALIH GRANTED INTERVIEW FOR
EVENING SAME DAY.

2. I JUDGE THAT SALIH IS STILL NOT COMPLETELY
COMFORTABLE IN HIS NEW ROLE, PARTICULARLY IN DEALING WITH
FOREIGNERS, BUT HIS AVIDITY AND ABSORPTION IN TASKS OF
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POWER IS STRIKING. HE IS NOT RELAXED YOUNG MAN. HE
DOESN'T SMILE MUCH, DOESN'T WARM UP TO A SUBJECT WITH
USUAL ARABIC ANIMADVERSIONS, DOESN'T YET UNDERSTAND HOW
LARGE PROGRAMS REQUIRE TIME AND PERSUASION RATHER THAN
JUST INITIATING ORDER. HE LISTENS CLOSELY, HOWEVER, AND
IS CLEARLY TRYING TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

3. I BEGAN BY SAYING I HAD GOOD NEWS FOR HIM AND WANTED TO GET HIS VIEWS ON EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION. GOOD NEWS WAS THAT I COULD GIVE HIM BEGINNINGS OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS HE HAD ASKED ME ON JULY 12 AND TELL HIM WHEN HE COULD EXPECT COMPLETE AND DETAILED RESPONSES.

4. I SAID I THOUGHT HE SHOULD HAVE NO DOUBT ABOUT US TAKING DIRECT AND EFFECTIVE ROLE IN MILITARY SUPPLY PROGRAMS IN FUTURE. I MENTIONED F-5 TEAM, SAYING THAT FIRST FRUIT OF THEIR EFFORT WOULD BE EARLY DELIVERY OF FOUR TRAINERS ALONG WITH PEOPLE WHO COULD SUPPORT PLANES AND TRAIN YEMENIS. I TOLD HIM THAT SANA DATT RUSZKIEWICZ HAD LEFT DAY BEFORE FOR MEETING IN RIYADH WHICH WOULD INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM JCS AND OTHER WASHINGTON OFFICES AS WELL AS OUR MILITARY TRAINING TEAM IN SAUDI ARABIA. THESE MEETINGS WOULD PRODUCE PROPOSALS FOR A MEETING WITH SAUDIS ON 29 JULY. LATTER, I SAID, WOULD BE ATTENDED BY HIGH-RANKING DOD CIVILIAN OFFICIAL. (HE LAUGHED, BRIEFLY, WHEN I TOLD HIM THAT IN OUR RPT OUR SYSTEMS, CIVILIANS WERE MORE POWERFUL THAN OFFICERS.) I SAID THAT HE COULD EXPECT AN AMERICAN AND SAUDI DELEGATION TO VISIT SANA SHORTLY AFTERWARDS -- I THOUGH PERHAPS IN THE COMING WEEK -- TO PRESENT THEIR PROGRAM. SAID I HAD NO DETAILS ABOUT THAT PROGRAM, AND DIDN'T SECRET

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WANT TO MISLEAD HIM, IN MATTERS OF DETAIL, BUT THE AIM WOULD BE TO INCREASE YEMENI CAPACITY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE IN KEY FIELDS LIKE DEFENSE AGAINST AN AIR ATTACK. THERE WOULD PROBABLY, I SAID, BE SPECIAL HELP WITH ARTILLERY. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS WOULD CREATE A CONSPICUOUS AMERICAN PRESENCE HERE.

5. SALIH TOOK NOTES. HE WAS PLAINLY VERY PLEASED, AND I GOT ANOTHER OF HIS RARE SMILES, BUT A SLOW, RATHER SELF-SATISFIED ONE OF A MAN WHO IS GETTING WHAT HE WANTS. AFTER SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MEETINGS IN RIYADH -- I DODGED DETAILS BUT DID TELL HIM THAT THE US WOULD MEET BY ITSELF FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN MEET WITH THE SAUDIS FOR A FEW MORE -- HE LAID DOWN HIS PAD AND ASKED ME, AS HE HAD ON 12 JULY, WHETHER WE WOULD STAND BESIDE HIM IF THE SOUTH ATTACKED, AS THE SOVIETS WOULD STAND BEHIND SOUTHERNERS ON SUCH AN OCCASION, AND WHETHER WE WOULD CREATE AN ARMY IN THE NORTH WHICH WOULD MATCH THE SOUTH "PLANE FOR PLANE, SHIP FOR SHIP, TANK FOR TANK."

6. I TOLD HIM I HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS BUT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I DOUBTED HE WOULD GET EITHER KIND OF COMMITMENT FROM US. SALIH WAS BIT TAKEN BACK. I SAID WE APPROACHED PROBLEM FROM POLITICAL VIEW AS WELL AS MILITARY. WE THOUGHT MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPONS AGAINST SOUTH AT THIS POINT, IN FACT, WERE NOT MILITARY BUT DIPLOMATIC, ECONOMIC POLITICAL.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SANA 3679

LIMDIS

MILITARY PROBLEM WAS DETERRENCE, WHICH DID NOT REQUIRE EQUIVALENCE OF FORCES. WHAT IT REQUIRED WAS PERCEPTION IN ADEN BY SOVIETS AS WELL AS SOUTHERNERS THAT ATTACK ON NORTH WOULD PRODUCE ANGRY AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE FROM NEIGHBORS IN PENINSULA, OTHER ARABS AND WESTERN FRIENDS. HE ASKED IF US WOULD JOIN "COMMON DEFENSE" ARRANGEMENTS WITH PENINSULAR FRIENDS OF YAR. I SAID WE WOULD BE WORKING HERE. SOVIETS WOULD HESITATE TAKE US ON FRONTALLY. THAT WAS REAL IMPORTANCE OF US MILITARY AID ACTIVITIES IN YEMEN. I DIDN'T THINK THEREFORE THAT YEMEN SHOULD LET ANYONE DRAG IT INTO WAR WITH SOUTH, OR PROVIDE WOUTH WITH CAUSE FOR RETALIATION FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES.

7. SALIH SAID FORCEFULLY THAT HE COULD NOT RISK WAR. HE WANTED TO AVOID IT AT ALL COSTS. HOWEVER, HE

DID NOT THINK MUCH OF IDEA THAT CONFRONTATION WITH
SOUTH COULD BE CONDUCTED CHIEFLY BY NON MILITARY RATHER
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THAN MILITARY MEANS. WE DISCUSSED THIS FOR SOME TIME,
WITH SALIH LISTENING CAREFULLY BUT SHOWING SKEPTICISM.
I SAID US POLICY WAS TO STRENGTHEN YAR DEFENSE,
DETER SOUTH, BUY TIME IN WHICH CONFRONTATION WOULD
WEAKEN ADENI LEADERSHIP IN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
FIELDS WHILE MAKING NORTH YEMEN AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNA-
TIVE FOR SOUTHERN NATIONALISTS.

8. I ASKED SALIH FOR HIS VIEWS ON FUTURE DEALINGS
WITH SOUTH. HE SAID HE WAS BEGINNING TO MOVE AGAINST
THEM BUT, TO DATE, HE HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN SUPPORT HE
NEEDS. "MORAL SUPPORT," HE SAID AGAIN AND AGAIN,
HE HAD, AND HE REFERRED TO CARTER LETTER AS EXCELLENT
EXAMPLE OF THIS. "BUT NO ONE HAS DELIVERED ME ANY
WEAPONS. I HAVE NOTHING."

9. I POINTED OUT HE HAD BEEN ELECTED ON 14 JULY.
PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE HAD BEEN SWIFT AND UNEQUIVOCAL.
IT WAS SIGNIFICANT MESSAGE. EFFORTS WERE NOW IN
ADVANCED STATE TO REVITALIZE MILITARY PROGRAM. WHAT
HE SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT, I SUGGESTED, IS WHAT
SOVIETS WOULD DO WHEN THEY LEARNED OF US ACTIONS.
ONE REASON WHY I WANTED TO SEE HIM NOW, EVEN THOUGH
I DIDN'T HAVE FULL ANSWERS TO GIVE HIM ABOUT MILITARY
SUPPLIES, WAS TO ALLOW HIM TO MAKE POLITICAL PLANS,
TO TAKE INITIATIVE TO MOVE AGAINST SOVIETS BEFORE THEY
MOVED AGAINST HIM IN SOME WAY. WITH SALIH
LISTENING CLOSELY, I SKETCHED SCENARIO IN WHICH HE
MOVED NOW TO THIN OUT SOVIET PRESENCE HERE,
SHOWING HIMSELF STRONG LEADER, UNAFRAID OF SOVIETS,
OR OF REPRISAL BY THEIR SOUTHERN OR CUBAN MINIONS.
IT WOULD MAKE SOVIETS RESPECT HIM, THINK TWICE BEFORE
PROVOKING HIM. I WOULD MAKE HIM LEADER OF ARAB

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OPINION AGAINST NEW IMPERIALISM WHICH IS KILLING
YEMENIS IN SOUTH TODAY. IT WOULD MAKE SOVIETS APPEAR
TO PAY PRICE FOR CONNECTION WITH KILLERS OF GHASHMI. IF
HE ACTED NOW--RATHER THAN AFTER NEW AID CAME--
HE WOULD CONNECT HIS ACT WITH DEATH OF YAR PRESIDENT
RATHER THAN WITH PAYMENTS FROM SAUDIS. AND--I
CONCLUDED--HE HAD TO FACE FACT THAT SOVIETS DID NOT

MEAN WILL BY HIM. THEIR OFFERS OF WEAPONS WERE NOT SINCERE.
I ALLUDED TO REPORT WE HAD THAT YEMEN AIR PLANE HAD ONCE
AGAINFLOWN--THAT DAY-- TO WARSAW. IF THIS WAS FOR ARMS, AS IN
PAST, WERENT THEY JUST PLAYING FOR TIME AND POSITION. I ASKED.

10. SALIH WAS EMBARRASSED AND IRKED THAT WE HAD
SPOTTED WARSAW FLIGHT. HE DENIED IT BUT WENT ON TO
TALK AT LENGTH ABOUT SOVIETS. HE ACCEPTED THAT THEIR
MISSIONS HERE WERE CENTERS OF "SPYING AND RUMORS AND
FALSE OFFERS." BUT HE SAID HE HAD TO HAVE WEAPONS.
"I HAVE NOTHING FROM US OR SAUDIS SO FAR, NOTHING.
I WANT SIGNED AGREEMENTS, TRAINING MISSIONS, DELIVERIES.
THEN SOVIETS WILL GO."

COMMENT: I DIDN'T PRESS MATTER OF SOVIETS EVEN
THOUGH, DAY BEFORE, SAUDIS HAD CALLED ON ME TO GET ME
TO GO SEE SALIH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ABOUT MATTER.
HOWEVER, IDEA HAS BEEN PLANED AS PART OF BROADER
YAR EFFORT NEEDED TO REDRESS PSYCHOLOGICAL BALANCE WITH
SOUTH. MAYBE IT WILL GROW IN SALIH'S IMAGINATION.
I'M NOT SURE. SALIH IS CONCERNED FIRST AND FOREMOST
WITH GUNS. VISIT COULDN'T SATISFY HIM ON THAT ACCOUNT,
BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO STAY IN TOUCH, TO KEEP HIS
CONFIDENCE. VISIT CLEARLY REVERSED HIS SUGGESTION--
CONVEYED TO ME EARLIER IN DAY BY ECON MIN HAMDANI
AT ORDERS OF PRESIDENT--THAT YARG SEND HIGH-
RANKING MILITARY DELEGATION TO WASHINGTON AT ONCE.
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